

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A communication interface for communicating between a gaming machine and a gaming machine network, the interface comprising:
multiple non-network communication ports, a first one the non-network communication ports allowing communication of data according to a first communication protocol and a second one the non-network communication ports
allowing communication of data according to a second communication protocol; and
a network communication port, wherein the network communication port allows communication of data according to a third communication protocol.
- 10 2. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the first communication protocol is a first proprietary communication protocol.
- 15 3. The communication interface of claim 2 wherein the second communication protocol is a second proprietary communication protocol that is different from the first proprietary communication protocol.
- 20 4. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the network communication port communicates data with a gaming machine server that provides at least one game service in the first communication protocol.
- 25 5. The communication interface of claim 4 wherein the game service is selected from group consisting of progressive game services, bonus game services, player tracking services, cashless/ticketing services, game downloading services, prize services, entertainment content services, concierge services, lottery services and money transfer services.
- 30 6. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the third communication protocol is one of a TCP/IP, SLIP, and PPP communication protocol.
7. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the first communication protocol is selected from the group consisting of a progressive game service protocol, a bonus game service protocol, a player tracking service protocol, a cashless/ticketing

service protocol, a game downloading service protocol, a prize service protocol, an entertainment content service protocol, a concierge service protocol, a lottery service protocol and a money transfer service protocol.

8. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the communication interface further comprises logic configured or designed to communicate data in both the first and second communication protocols and communicate the data in a third communication protocol over a network using the third communication protocol.
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9. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the interface is included in a player tracking unit.
10. 10. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the gaming machine employs proprietary gaming software that provides data in the non-network communication protocol to the one or more non-network communication ports.
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11. The communication interface of claim 10 wherein the proprietary gaming software is not configured to receive messages transmitted in the third communication protocol.
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12. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the communication interface is assigned an IP address.
13. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein a physical interface of the one or more non-network communication ports is selected from the group consisting of RS-422/485, Fiber Optic, RS-232, DCS Current Loop, Link Progressive Current Loop, FireWire, Wireless, Ethernet and USB.
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14. The communication interface of claim 1 wherein the network interface is a wired Ethernet connection.
25. 15. A method of providing data between a gaming machine and one or more gaming machine servers in a gaming machine network, the method comprising:
configuring a first communication port included in a communication interface to communicate data according to a first communication protocol used by a first gaming machine function on the gaming machine;

configuring a second communication port included in the communication interface to communicate data according to a second communication protocol used by a second gaming machine function on the gaming machine;

establishing a communication connection between the communication

5 interface and a server in the network using a third communication protocol;

transmitting data from the server to the communication interface using the third communication protocol;

converting the data from the third communication protocol to one of the first and second communication protocols; and

10 transmitting the data from the communication interface to a processor in the gaming machine or to a peripheral device associated with the gaming machine in the one of the first and second non-network communication protocols.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the first gaming machine function employs proprietary gaming software that accepts and provides the data in the first

15 communication protocol.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the proprietary gaming software is not able to receive data transmitted in the third communication protocol.

18. The method of claim 15 further comprising assigning the communication interface or the gaming machine an IP address.

20 19. The method of claim 15 further comprising:

transmitting data from the gaming machine to the communication interface using the first communication protocol;

converting the data from the first communication protocol to the third communication protocol; and

25 transmitting the data in the third communication protocol to the server across the gaming machine network.

20. The method of claim 15 wherein the third communication protocol is one of a TCP/IP, SLIP, and PPP communication protocol.

21. The method of claim 15 wherein the server is selected from the group

30 consisting of a prize server, a game server, an entertainment content server, a cashless

ticketing server, progressive game server, a bonus game server, a concierge service server, a lottery server and a money transfer server.

22. The method of claim 15 further comprising storing the gaming data in memory included in the gaming machine.

5 23. A player tracking unit in communication with a gaming machine and a gaming machine network, the player tracking unit comprising:
processor logic that employs a player tracking communication protocol for implementing a player tracking service; and
a communication interface device in communication with the gaming machine
10 and the gaming machine network, the communication interface device designed or configured to communicate data in both the player tracking communication protocol and a second communication protocol with the gaming machine and communicate the data in a third communication protocol over the network using a third communication protocol.

15 24. The player tracking unit of claim 23 further comprising:
a display;
one or more of illumination devices adjacent to said display;
one or more of the following player tracking interface devices: a card reader, a key pad, a bonus button, a function button, a microphone, a sound projection device, a
20 camera, a wireless interface device, a proximity sensor and a finger print reader.

25. The player tracking unit of claim 23 wherein the processor logic is further designed or configured 1) to communicate with a display, one or more player tracking interface devices, a master gaming controller that controls a game played on a gaming machine and a player tracking server.

25 26. The player tracking unit of claim 23 further including a firewall.